

Commercial Bank
(First Church of Christ, Scientist)
206 Main Street
Natchez
Adams County
Mississippi

HABS No. MS-190

HABS
MISS,
I-NATCH,
26-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HABS
MISS,
1-NATCH,
26-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

COMMERCIAL BANK
(First Church of Christ, Scientist)

HABS No. MS-190

Location: 206 Main Street, Natchez, Adams County, Mississippi

Present Owner: First of Church of Christ (Scientist)

Present Use: Worship

Significance: The First Church of Christ (Scientist), a National Historic Landmark, is a superb example of Greek Revival architecture, dominated by an academic Ionic portico. Originally built for the Commercial Bank of Natchez in 1836, the church retains a great deal of the building's original fabric, including two bank vaults.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1836
2. Architect: Unknown
3. Original plans and construction: Although the building does not retain its original function as a bank, its adaptation to a church in 1946 has not altered its original plan. Except for furnishings, the First Church of Christ (Scientist) retains the fabric of the Commercial Bank of Natchez.
4. Alterations and additions: The sanctuary of the church originally served as a bank and later as a post office. When the building became a church in 1946, seats were installed and a dias placed on the center axis. These minor alterations in no way destroy the architectural fabric of the interior.

B. Historical Context:

The Commercial Bank was chartered in 1833 and construction of the building was begun shortly after the lot was purchased in 1836. The bank was shortlived. In 1857, the building was conveyed by Alexander C. Ferguson, Receiver of the "late Commercial Bank," to William Robertson.

COMMERCIAL BANK

(First Church of Christ, Scientist)

HABS No. MS-190

(Page 2)

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General statement:

1. Architectural character: The church is one of the finest and most academic examples of Greek Revival architecture in the State of Mississippi.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent

B. Description of exterior

1. Overall description: The rectangular building is one story and has five bays.
2. Foundations: Brick
3. Walls: The walls are of buff-colored stuccoed brick except for the main facade which is finished in stone.
4. Structural system: The masonry walls are load bearing.
5. Portico: The three bay portico is supported by four fluted Ionic columns which carry a full entablature and a shallow pediment.
6. Chimneys: Two brick chimneys are not visible from the front.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Single leaf door at main entrance is divided into two vertical panels with carving. There is a simple, double fascia architrave with a wide backband.
 - b. Windows: The front windows are double hung with six over six glazing; the side windows are double hung with twelve over twelve glazing and heavily paneled shutters.
8. Roof shape: There is a wide overhanging cornice. The uppermost member of the entablature surrounds the structure.

C. Description of interior:

1. Floor plans: From the portico, one enters a short hall with an office on each side. Beyond this hall is the main banking room which has three tall windows on each side. It is now furnished with seating for church services. The congregation faces a low platform and pulpit placed in front of an alcove. It is framed by Greek Doric columns which support a full entablature and are flanked by bank vaults.

COMMERCIAL BANK

(First Church of Christ, Scientist)

HABS No. MS-190

(Page 3)

2. Flooring: Wood
3. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls and ceilings are finished with plaster. A cornice with notable plaster anthemions decorates the banking room.
4. Openings: The architraves above the double paneled doors are enriched by corner and center blocks with foliated designs.
5. Decorative features: An alcove, with Doric columns supporting a full entablature, is the primary architectural feature of the interior.

D. Site:

The First Church of Christ is placed directly upon Main Street and faces northwest.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Mississippi Department of Archives and History, National Register File, Adams County, Commercial Bank or First Church of Christ (Scientist).

Project coordinated by the Mississippi
Department of Archives and History.
Elbert R. Hilliard, Director
Data compiled by William C. Allen,
Architectural Historian. 1975

Edited by Marion K. Schlefer,
Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Washington, D. C.
1984